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Stones Who Love Me

Dimensionality, Enclosure and Petrification in Andean Culture

Des pierres qui m'aiment : dimensionnalité, imbrication et pétrification dans la culture andine

Piedras que me aman: dimensión, imbricación y petrificación en la cultura andina

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Photos 1. a) Inqaychu in the form of a ram. One leg is broken, which may account for its having been sold in Cuzco, Peru, as discussed in the final section of the paper. It measures approximately 7 cm × 5 cm × 3 cm © Catherine J. Allen.
b) Inqaychu in the form of an alpaca. The hole in its back would have been filled with fat. It measures approximately 7 cm × 4 cm × 2 cm © Catherine J. Allen.
c) Small inqaychu in the form of a llama.
It measures approximately 4 cm × 2.5 cm × .5 cm © Catherine J. Allen

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Inqaychu: the living one

In many Andean highland communities, tiny stone animals called *inqaychu* (Photos 1 a-c) slumber in beds of coca leaves, bundled in finely woven napkins and hidden away in the niches and rafters of adobe houses. At intervals these sleepers are roused and removed from hiding (on the first of August, during Carnival at the beginning of Lent, during the feast of St. John the Baptist on June 24, and often during a feast day in December). Children squeal in delight as the bundles are opened – *muNAYcha! munaypuni! (how pretty! Oh so beautiful!)* Adults caress the stones as they set them carefully on a table or a fine textile spread on the ground. Quietly they whisper endearments – *kawsaq* (living one), *khuyaq* (caring one). They feed the loving little stones with libations of cane alcohol or corn beer and give them new coca leaves to graze upon. All the while they tell the inqaychus of their desires: "May my alpacas be of many colors, "May they all be white, "May many females be born this year" *"Phaq!"* go the stones. They breathe, and their breath invigorates the herd and informs it with the desired characteristics (*see* Ricard, 2007: 211). Such remarkable things could not be of human manufacture. *Apukuna* (powerful places in the landscape) bestow inqaychus on favored individuals who then pass them on to their descendents through the generations. Shepherds in very high altitude communities devoted to pastoralism say inqaychus are beautiful animals that emerge from springs and glacial lakes at night or in dense morning fog. A quick-witted individual who encounters such a creature can capture it by touching it with his foot or throwing a coca cloth over it (Flores, 1977: 221). Then the marvelous animal shrinks until it becomes a tiny stone, which should be bundled still warm and quivering inside the coca cloth and quickly carried home. Although the marvelous creature has been captured it is not "owned" but stays of its own accord. If at some point it gets lost or stolen, it is because it has chosen to leave (Flores, 1977: 219; Sillar, 2012: 71). Inqaychus are also called *khuya* (loving one), *illa* (ray of light), or *inqa*. They are bisexual, for the inqaychu contains the potential of both sexes within itself[1]. Flores comments, *"[I]nqa* is the generative and vital principle – the source and origin of happiness, well-being and abundance" (1977: 218; my translation)[2]. Arguedas relates *inqa* to the word *inka*:

> "*Inqa*" and not "*Inka*" is how this word is pronounced by the Canas Indians; and "*Inqa*" not only signifies emperor, "*Inqa*" is the name for the originating model of every being, according to Quechua mythology. This concept is more commonly known by the term "*inkachu*" (1955: 74 quoted in Gow, 1974: 69; my translation).

1. Flores includes an interesting observation regarding the bisexuality of inqaychus. "They are asexual, or perhaps bisexual, because they can be male or female, though not simultaneously. [T]he sex varies according to the context of the invocations and songs that are being performed" (1977: 224).

2. Also see Gow & Gow, 1975; I. Bolin, 1998: 32.

Photo 2. An Inka conopa in the form of a llama, made of serpentine with inclusions of chromite. It measures 5.6 cm × 3.3 cm × 5.9 cm. The hole on its back would have been filled with llama fat

The importance of inqaychus in Andean cultures dates to pre-Columbian times (Photo 2). In 1621 the Spanish inquisitor Pablo de Arriaga described them in an instruction manual for rural priests tasked with rooting out idolatrous practices, including those which were carried on quietly in rural households – such as the adoration of stones called *conopas* (a word no longer in use):

> The conopas, which in Cuzco and thereabouts they call *chancas*, are really their Lares and Penates gods, and thus they also call them *huasicamayuq*, the caretaker or owner of the house; they are of diverse materials and shapes, although ordinarily particular small stones that are notable in some way, in color or shape. And they say that when an Indian man or woman comes across a stone of this kind, he or she goes to the sorcerer and says, "My Father, what have I found, oh what can it be?" And he says with great admiration, "This is conopa, revere and worship it with great care so that you will have plenty of food and good living" (1968 [1621]: 11-12; my translation).

Arriaga goes on to say,

> Usually conopas are passed from parents to children and it is certain that the ones they had in pagan times before the coming of the Spaniards, their grandchildren now have. They have kept them as the most precious thing their fathers have left them. There are particular conopas, some for maize, others for potatoes, others for the increase of the herds, which are sometimes in the shapes of rams [i.e. llamas] (*ibid.*).

He advised that inquisitor priests should interrogate native Andeans concerning:

> what conopa or chanca they have and if the rest of the Indians have them, which is surely the case, and it is necessary to press them on this, because in our experience it is easier to discover the communal *huacas* (shrines) than the particular items that each person has (1968 [1621]: 56; my translation).

Indeed, four centuries later, the little stone creatures still slumber among coca leaves – still treasured by their families, and very much as Arriaga described them, although called by different names. Several other kinds of powerful objects exist in rural Andean communities. Powerful places may favor certain individuals with a personal power object called *istrilla* (a convenient linguistic convergence of Quechua *illa* and Spanish *estrella*, star.) Doña Balvina, for example, showed me her istrilla, an antique coin she found as a girl while playing on a hillside. Another type of power object is the *misa*, which comes to ritual specialists in the lightning bolt that announces their vocation. In this paper, however, I focus mainly on inqaychus. How are we to understand these marvelous objects? My own experience with inqaychus comes from Sonqo, a Quechua-speaking community in southern Peru. Located between 3200 and 3600 meters in altitude, Sonqo's approximately three hundred inhabitants subsist on a mixed economy of potato farming and the herding of sheep and camelids, supplemented by seasonal wage labor as well as the sale of potatoes and, occasionally, hand-woven textiles. I spent about a year in Sonqo in 1975-76, and I have returned nine times since then (most recently in 2011) for stays of varying lengths. In certain respects my "ethnographic present" applies better to Sonqo as it was in the 1970s and 1980s than to Sonqo today. The community has seen many changes since the mid-1990s, among them a steep decline in pastoralism and conversion of some families to evangelical Protestantism (*see* Allen, 2002: 203-247). I address some of these changes in the final section of this paper. Fieldwork in Sonqo required me to suspend many of my "normal" assumptions about the nature of things. Sonqueños took for granted that everything was alive and that all objects possessed some kind of personhood and subjectivity (*see* Allen, 1998, 2002, 2015). In other words, all objects were subjects, which meant that all activity was **inter**active. The interactive relationship with inqaychus – living, stones, both loved and loving – is a particularly salient and ritualized instance of an animistic orientation. Because animacy is the inqaychus' primary characteristic, it seems well to position this discussion theoretically before turning to a more detailed account of the ethnographic context.

Points of View

Until the so-called "ontological turn" began to take shape in the 1990s, "animism" was largely absent from anthropological discourse, considered an outmoded relic of 19th century evolutionism. By the early 2000s, however, the old concept had been rejuvenated and was being taken seriously as an important human orientation to the world (*e.g.* Descola, 2013 [2005]). The attribution of mindful life to non-human material forms raises problems for Western philosophy and requires "an ethnographically-based reshuffling of our conceptual schemes" (Viveiros de Castro, 1998: 470). Nurit Bird-David (1999) characterizes animism as an interactive stance toward the environment, which she calls *relational epistemology*. Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (1998) uses the term *ontological perspectivism* and contrasts perspectivist cosmologies with those of "the

West[3]". He argues that while the latter assume an objectively real natural world, perspectivist cosmologies assume that all beings participate in a universal culture. "All beings see (represent) the world in the same way – what changes is the world that they see" (1998: 477). He illustrates his point with examples from his research in Amazonia: what humans see as blood, jaguars see as chicha; what humans see as a mud hole the tapir sees as a ceremonial house. These examples illustrate ontological premises that privilege *viewpoint;* dismissing them as mere metaphoric projections of human imagination onto animal nature would be to miss the point (also *see* Sandor, 1986). Similarly, regarding Siberian hunters Rane Willerslev comments, "Personhood, rather than being an inherent property of persons and things, is constituted in and through the relationships into which they enter... The relational context in which [something] is placed and experienced determines its being"(2007: 20-21)[4]. Viveiros de Castro, Willerslev, Bird-David and others developed their ideas in the context of hunting societies (Amazonia, Siberia and India, respectively); their discussions concentrate mainly on relationships between humans and animals[5]. While their work is suggestive, one must bear in mind that the Andean context is very different. The Andean environment has been intensely domesticated for millennia by highly stratified, expansive societies with centralized governments and economies. For Andean peoples, highly elaborated relationships with land-forms and artifacts are at least as important as relationships with animals. Under Inka rule, for example, humans, artifacts and places were joined in complex, hierarchically organized chains of authority.

Philippe Descola's influential classification of ontological types (animism, totemism, analogism and naturalism), distinguishes Andean societies as "analogical" rather than "animistic[6]". Analogism he describes as "a mode of identification that divides up the whole collection of existing beings into a multiplicity of essences, forms and substances separated by small distinctions, so that it becomes possible to recompose the system of initial contrasts into a dense network of analogies" (2013 [2005]: 201). Indeed, this precisely captures the tendencies to multiply and recombine binary contrasts so evident in Andean modes of social organization and cultural expression. I would argue, however, that this analogical orientation relies on an underlying animism. As Sahlins comments, in an appreciative but critical reading of Descola, "animism, totemism and analogism

3. I prefer Vivieros de Castro's term *ontological perspectivism* because at issue is a theory of being (ontology), not a theory of knowledge (epistemology). See also Viverios de Castro 2004.

4. Willerslev also draws on the ideas of Tim Ingold (2000). A similar approach is developed by Stensrud (2011) in her interesting study of working class Cuzqueños' relationship with local and regional saints. Also see Brightman, Gould, Ulturgasheva (2012).

5. An exception is Santos-Granero's edited volume on Amazonian theories of materiality and personhood exploring how "things, or at least some things, are considered to be subjectivities possessed of a social life" (2009: 2). Other discussions of the agency of material objects in Amazonian cultures include Gow (1999); Guss (1989); and Whitten & Whitten (1993).

6. On the differences between Descola and Viveiros de Castro see Latour 2009.

are but three forms of animism, namely communal, segmentary, and hierarchical". All three types share "notions of the subjective personhood of non-human beings" (Sahlins, 2014: 281)[7]. My primary interest in this paper is to understand how the animacy of stones makes sense within a particular ontological orientation. In other words, my focus is "local" and singular rather than comparative, and thickly descriptive rather than analytical. The description is shaped to a certain extent by ideas articulated by Viveiros de Castro, Descola and others who have helped to "reset" current thinking in a useful direction, away from the assumption that animism is an expression of pathological, childish or primitive mentalities. If I have a theoretical point to make it is simply that taking animism in its own terms requires resetting the terms of our discourse away from the usual symbolic analysis – thinking in terms of presentation rather than representation, of predication rather than symbolism. I hope to show that although an inqaychu stands **in relation to** many other entities, it does not stand **for** anything but itself**.** It is a small stone animal, with powerful connections to mountains, humans and other animals.

Through the Water Doors

We raise them and they raise us

Nothing is absolutely inanimate. Any place that is distinct enough to have a name (for example, a rocky knoll on a mountain side, or a rock outcrop on a river bank) is alive and has a personhood that must be respected. Human beings and places are in a relationship of *reciprocal appropriation*, to use a phrase coined by Native American writer Scott Momaday (1976: 80)[8]. The intensified contexts we call ritual enable relationships of reciprocal appropriation among beings of different ontological status (such as humans, mountains and small stone animals); for example, the family nourishes the inqaychus with coca leaves and alcohol and the inqaychus in turn vitalize the family's herd. The mutual appropriation, however, is an on-going process not confined to special occasions[9]. Even the most mundane quotidian activity entails interaction with a sentient and responsive environment.

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7. I do not agree with Sahlins, however, that all three are versions of anthropomorphism. On this point I follow Viveiros de Castro: "Animism is not a projection of substantive human qualities cast onto animals, but rather expresses the logical equivalence of the reflexive relations that humans and animals each have to themselves: salmon are to (see) salmon as humans are to (see) humans, namely, (as) human" (1998: 477).

8. Keith Basso (1996: 64) borrows this phrase to describe the Apaches' interactive relationship with their landscape.

9. Bruce Mannheim observes that "Reciprocity saturates the organization of the Quechua lexicon and grammar ... the axioms of reciprocity do not exist in an abstract netherworld; rather they are latent in every act of speaking" (1991: 90-91).

During my visits to Sonqo I stayed with families who graciously let me participate in ritual activities which included the care and feeding of inqaychus[10]. I learned that inqaychus emerge from marshy springs on the treeless slopes of Antaqaqa, Sonqo's guardian hill. The springs are "water doors" (*unu punku*) opening to an interior landscape within the hill. It is said that during August when the Earth is awake and sensitive, and at dawn on St. John's Day when the Sun comes dancing back from the winter solstice, one can hear them "bleating prettily". There are inqaychus for various aspects of the household economy, including pebble potatoes and house compounds with their fields. No one I spoke with claimed to have actually found their own inqaychus, though a few admitted wistfully that they looked for them. All were heirlooms, passed from "ancient grandfathers" through the generations to maintain the well-being (*allin kawsay*) of the household's *uywa*, its flocks.

Uywa is derived from the verb *uyway,* which means to "nurture, raise, bring up a creature into adulthood." While the noun uywa usually refers to herd animals (llamas, alpacas, sheep and cattle), the verb uyway refers to the raising of any living creature – children, guinea pigs, even potatoes (potatoes too, thrive on music and should be treated compassionately). A household thrives only if the married couple at its heart is successful at uyway. Uywa are fed, protected, disciplined and made useful. Different kinds of uywa are systematically interrelated in order to maintain the household as a more-or-less self-contained whole. For example, herd animals defecate in the corral, providing manure for the crops that feed the humans who care for the animals who provide the manure, and so on. In the process of nurturing and caring for household creatures, a maturing adult constructs a responsible self. At death he or she has to answer to these creatures. Gose, writing about a village in Apurimac, reports that a deceased person has to pass through a series of villages in which domestic animals and even common utensils avenge themselves for any wrongs they suffered at his or her hands (1994: 124-5; also *see* Robin, 2005). Among communities that are exclusively or mainly pastoralist, the relationship with llamas and alpacas is especially intense. "We raise them, and they raise us," is a sentiment often noted by ethnographers (*e.g.*, Bugallo and Tomasi, 2012). Like people, herd animals have lineages whose histories are intertwined with those of the herders. A successful herder knows her animals' temperaments and gives them descriptive names alluding to their colors or to birds that have similar markings. In some regions herders sing seasonal songs to their llamas and alpacas: "*Mother Llama, dear Mother, what path will you follow, where will you graze?*" (Arnold, Yapita 1998). Choosing animals to be slaughtered for food or sacrifice,

10. These occasions included the Feast of Saint John in 1975, 1978 and 1984; August 1 in 1975, 1978, 1980 and 1984; Carnival week in 1976; the Feast of the Conception in 1985; and the post-Carnival season in 1995.

or even to be sold, is a grave responsibility; a woman will sit quietly meditating on her animals to determine which is "ready" for the fate at hand. Joined by at least a few companions, she "consoles" the chosen animal by sharing coca leaves and singing to it; then someone (usually not the herder) quickly cuts its throat. Coca and music bring the humans and animal into communion with powerful places who witness this taking of life and judge whether it is carried out quickly and compassionately. In some regions, though not in Sonqo, funerals entail sacrifice of a llama; times of stress or the beginning of a difficult venture may also call for llama sacrifice.

By the time I arrived in Sonqo in 1975 the herding of llamas and alpacas was already in decline. People recalled that their grandparents had sung elaborate songs to the herds, but they no longer remembered them. They did, however, continue rituals they deemed essential to maintaining harmony in the three-way relationship among humans, their herds and the animate Earth. During the first days of August, when the Earth is thought to be most alive and sensitive, the inqaychus are awakened and Mother Earth and Mountains are "fed" a burnt offering. The next day the family convenes in the corral with their animals, chewing coca, sharing corn beer and continuously playing music called Sargentu on flutes and drums. They toss libations of corn beer over the herd and "enflower" the animals by sewing colored tassels in their ears (Photo 3). Finally they force-feed the most prized animals with a "medicinal" brew of alcohol and herbs. Sheep have their day on June 24, the solstitial feast of St. John the Baptist. The ritual consists of pairing up a ewe and ram to be "married," and daubing the herd with red dye, all the while playing Sargentu (Photo 4). Then the family drives the animals out to pasture, playing flute and drums and dancing energetically. "*Tirakunata hap'ichinchis*," they explain. "We make the places light up". The places in turn "light up" the sheep. Places provide the animals with water and food (pasture grass); when "turned off" by human behavior they can withdraw this sustenance, and even withdraw the animals themselves by not replenishing the supply of new births. Humans, animals and places dwell together (Ingold, 2011)[11]. Inqaychus facilitate this three-way relationship. Thus understanding inqaychus entails discussion of the animacy of places (landforms). What does it mean, for Andean people like my acquaintances in Sonqo, to dwell in the world (*pacha*)?

11. I use the word dwell here in the sense of Ingold's dwelling perspective, "founded on the premise that the forms humans build arise within the currents of their involved activity, in the specific relational contexts of their practical engagement with their surroundings" (Ingold, 2011: 10).

Photo 3. With the help of his children, Luis Gutiérrez "enflowers" a llama by sewing colorful tassels into its ears. The little boy holds a bottle of maize beer that will be sprinkled on the beast as a libation © Catherine J. Allen

Photo 4. Valentina Quispe, her husband Serafeo and their children "marry" a ram and ewe and daub them with red dye © Catherine J. Allen, Sonqo, Peru, 1984

Animate Earth: Nested and Nesting

The world has a nested quality. Every place is a microcosm, contained by and containing other microcosms; one's perspective can expand and contract indefinitely. Pacha is sometimes translated as space/time because the word denotes both a moment in time and a location in space. The concept is more subtle, however, because pacha can exist at any scale (Salomon, 1991: 14). Depending on the context, pacha can denote the whole cosmos or the instant – the split second – in which an event takes place. Pacha is also profoundly concrete and material. For example, my friend Luis reminisced, "when you arrived in Sonqo, at that pacha (moment) we were holding a work party". He was referring to a concrete constellation of place, time and conscious human activity that included my arrival.

Pacha, often addressed as Pachamama (Mother Pacha), is an intimate companion throughout one's life; so are protuberances and declivities in her surface – mountains, lakes, hills, plains and rocks – places who control the well-being of people who live on and around them. Places are hierarchically ranked, with the snow-capped peaks exercising most power and authority. Collectively these powerful places are called *Tirakuna* (from Spanish *tierra* with Quechua plural – *kuna*). Inqaychus originate as beautiful animals in the most powerful places, called *Apus* (Lords). In Sonqo they are said to come from herds that Apu Antaqaqa guards in his interior[12]. Matrix though she is, Pacha is not self-sufficient; her existence depends upon *Inti* the Sun. Unlike Pachamama, the Sun is a distant being, often equated with God (*Dyus*) or Christ (*Hesu Kristu*). In a different sun, I was told, there would be a different pacha and a different kind of people (Allen, 2002: 75). It is almost a truism in Andean studies that the cosmos is tripartite – *Ukhu Pacha* (Interior World) refers to the earth's interior; *Hanan Pacha* (Upper World) refers to the heavens, while *Kay Pacha* (This World) is the intersection of the two. This model should not mislead us into thinking that the Sun pertains only to Hanan Pacha. To the contrary, he inhabits – or better said, informs – all three levels. At night the Inti passes underneath the Earth and the powers of Ukhu Pacha draw on this nighttime sun. This point has implications for our understanding of the inqaychus, which emerge from inside the earth and yet are intimately connected with sunlight. In some communities they are called *illa*, which in its most general sense signifies a ray of light (Flores, 1977: 222-224). In Sonqo, inqaychus are positioned facing the door, because that is *intiq haykuna* (the sun's entrance; commonly refers to the east) where the first rays of light will enter the house in the morning[13]. The door

12. In this respect Antaqaqa resembles the Master of Animals in Amazonian and other Amerindian cultures (*e.g.*, Reichel-Dolmatoff, 1971).

13. Flores (1977: 227) reports that in Paratía the inqaychu is placed facing a marine shell, called qocha (lake, ocean) because llamas and alpacas first emerged from water (see above, p. 2).

need not face east by the compass; the house is a microcosm with its own orientation to the sun. Once the inqaychus are fed, the family prepares to feed Pacha and the Tirakuna through an offering bundle composed of coca leaves, fat and other ingredients. The ingredients are carefully wrapped in a piece of white paper that, like a person, has a head and feet. Its head needs to be oriented toward the east as it burns. At this moment the places gather to feed upon its nourishing essence (*sami*).

Turning points

I would be hard put to find a context in which power objects, including inqaychus, do not involve a connection to the sun, lightning, reflected light or water. During August, when the Sun passes its nadir (is directly underfoot at midnight) the sensitive Earth is wide awake and inqaychus emerge from the springs ("water doors"). Sun brings rains that begin in September and increase through January; he is the ultimate source of the water on which life depends (*see* Urton, 1981: 64). Critical moments in the sun's course are like cracks in the world's fabric, moments of opening with potential for change in scale and configuration. Inqaychus emerge from "water doors" at turning points (in the Sun's annual passage – the solstices, zenith and nadir passages. Carnival (zenith) is the height of the rainy season, August (nadir) is the time of first rains, and at the moment of sunrise on June 24 the Sun's rays reflect off streams and springs, momentarily giving the water marvelous curative powers. These are also the moments when inqaychus should be awakened and fed. Critical turning points like zenith and nadir are instances of *alqa*, a Quechua word which denotes rupture, change in direction or change in tonality. Alqa is the singular switch-point where a thing leaves off being what it is and becomes something else (Cereceda, 1990; Ricard, 2007: 70-73)[14]. Alqa is the point at which the slope of a hillside changes, or the ground is broken, defining a distinct protuberance or declivity of some kind. Xavier Ricard (2007: 71) recalls asking a shepherd about small irregularities in the earth's surface:

> "Are these little apus?" he asked.
>
> "Yes," came the answer. "Little ones, little protrusions, little irregularities in the terrain. We make offerings to them so that nothing will happen to the llamas, so they'll hold them up them, keep them steady."
>
> "Are they powerful?"
>
> "Of course they're powerful. Don't they care for the animals? Don't we walk on them?" (Ricard, 2007: 71; my translation).

14. In weaving, alqa is the point of color change. A striped garment is, in effect, a study in alqay, an expression of controlled change, appropriate to wear during decision-making (as at a village assembly). On parallels between Andean textile design and social organization see, among others, Harris, 2000: 103.

Alqa is the place and moment of transformation, definition and identity. The first sunrise, when Inti blazed into existence, was alqa at a cosmic scale; so are the annual turning points in the Sun's orbit when the Earth is lively and marvelous herd animals emerge from the water doors – and if one is lucky, they turn to little stones.

The Animacy of Stone

Water doors, themselves places of rupture, are sites of lithification. People as well as animals turn into stone there. In Sonqo, inqaychus are said to frequent a deep ravine where three streams meet in a turbulent encounter called *tinku*. I was warned strenuously never to go near this highly dangerous "water door" because giant felines and *amaru*s (dragon-like serpents) emerge from the underworld there. The Inkas are said to have passed through this ravine as they fled from the Spanish invaders and an Inka girl turned to stone when she lagged behind her companions to urinate. She is still there, spouting water near her base. The Inka girl's transformation is the converse of that undergone by inqaychus. Both are transformed around water and change dimension in the process; but inqaychus emerge from water and shrink as they turn to stone while the Inca Daughter enters water, "water" emerges from her, and she grows in size while turning to stone. Another immense stone girl (*sipas qaqa*) sits next to a mountain lake high in the grasslands above Sonqo. She, too, has a stream of water trickling from her base. It is said that she turned to stone while pausing to urinate during her flight from a doomed city. At that very moment a deluge flooded that city and became the lake. These are but two examples of lithification in an Andean landscape covered with people and animals transformed at moments/places of cosmic transition or rupture into gigantic boulders, hills, outcrops and even mountains. All are alive, watchful and – like inqaychus – sometimes need to be fed.

In ritual, feeding is a technique for communicating across ontological categories, ubiquitous today as it was in the pre-Columbian Andes[15]. In funerals, for example, people have to consume vast quantities of food or alcoholic drink in order to share it with deceased kinsmen and powerful places. I was once instructed to send food through my stomach to that of my absent husband[16]. Feeding the Earth, places and inqaychus is part of the general cycle of reciprocity; if powerful entities are to give forth they must receive as well. The consequences of letting them go hungry are dire: as Jorge Flores comments, "If [the inqaychu] does not receive its ceremonies it becomes hungry and in order to satisfy itself

15. On Inca forced-feeding see, among others, Zuidema, 1980.

16. This expresses an ontological premise that bodies separated in space and time may yet be interconnected. I have discussed ritual forced-feeding at length elsewhere (*e.g.*, Allen 1998, 2002: 137-149; 2014).

it 'eats' the persons close to it" (1977: 226; my translation; also see Bolin, 1998: 38). The beautiful stones sustain us to the extent that we sustain them.

Animu

As the inqaychu shrinks and hardens into stone it condenses within itself an *animu* derived from that of the Apu. Every living thing has an animu which exists as a kind of halo or envelope – weak and ill-defined at birth, gradually taking a clear shape as the person matures, and losing that clarity in old age as the individual approaches death[17]. The animu can behave like a double, wandering from its material substrate in sleep or illness leaving behind an inert semblance of itself. The animu does not, however, exist independent of the body, and disperses after death. Xavier Ricard's extensive study of animu as understood by alpaca herders suggests that the Spanish word *animo* replaced a Quechua word with a related meaning, namely *kamaq* (variant spelling, *camac*). Ricard comments:

> [While] the etymology of this term is particularly uncertain, there is no doubt that the "animu" of the [highland] pastoralists retains in large part the meaning of camac, as it was still used in the early colonial period (2007: 78; my translation).

Salomon's discussion of kamaq in the sixteenth century Quechua language manuscript from Huarochirí is consistent with Ricard's conclusion:

> *Camay: a concept of specific essence and force, "to charge with being, to infuse with species power."* ... All things have their vitalizing prototypes or *camac* [agentive form of camay] ... Religious practice supplicates the camac ever to vitalize its *camasqa*, that is, its tangible instance or manifestation. Taylor (1974-76) has likened this idea to Platonic idealism, an insight that helps one understand the profoundly plural and ongoing nature of Andean creation but also minimizes its earthiness. *Camac* in the manuscript seems to suggest a being abounding in energy as physical as electricity or body warmth, not an abstraction or mental archetype (1991: 16).

Animu is more than a flow of enlivening energy (*sami*): it "infuses" its object with species power, giving it shape and specific characteristics[18]. When the inqaychu receives its libation, and – "*phaq!*" – breathes out, it infuses its possessor's herds with its powerful animu. Thus herders must offer libations and invocations with great concentration and mental energy. "The moment of the prayer is particularly important: in this instant is born, in the magic stone, the future form of animals in the flock" (Ricard, 2007: 211; my translation). Inqaychus are loci of creative agency extended from places into favored households in a

17. *See* P. La Riva, 2004: 78, Ricard, 2007: 77-90.

18. Animu and sami overlap conceptually and are sometimes used synonymously. Sami, however, is a more generalized animating force, while animu is an individualizing force that entails specific characteristics.

kind of distributed personhood (Gell, 1998; Allen, 2015)[19]. By way of inqaychus this creative energy is distributed through the human community; it finds expression in the vigor and individual characteristics (animu) of herd animals, whose manure, meat and wool sustains crops and families, and it returns to the place in offerings of various kinds.

Finding the right words

In this paper I have endeavored to show how the animacy of inqaychus makes sense within an ontological orientation characteristic of rural Andean pastoralists. In closing I want to return briefly to the problem of symbolism. In my ethnography of Sonqo, written in 1988, I described inqaychus as "small stones representing domestic animals" (Allen, 2002 [1988]: 41). In this paper I have avoided describing them in these terms. The word "representing" is problematic because it implies an iconic (i.e., metaphoric) relationship of one-to-one resemblance between the stones and domestic animals. From a herder's perspective, however, the inqaychu operates according to an entirely different mode of signification. An inqaychu doesn't represent anything; it presents itself. Its animu derives from the Apu in a kind of fractal relationship. Recognizing the personhood of places and stones (as we must in this context) entails shifting our terms of analysis to presentation rather than representation, and to predication rather than symbolism. "Resetting" the terms of our discourse opens the way for more nuanced relationships with other ways of living in the world. A powerful object is not symbolic of anything – it is what it is, a crucial node in a nexus of empowering relationships.

Starving stones

The Inka Museum in Cuzco has a splendid collection of Inka conopas, the sight of which startled and saddened my Sonqueño friend Luis Gutiérrez when he accompanied me to the museum. His reaction points up the incongruity between his relationship to inqaychus and that of institutions that display them in glass cases as cultural artifacts and/or works of art. Are the beautiful stones to be considered as living persons or as inanimate things? This is the dilemma that underlies current struggles over repatriation in many North American museums[20]. As far as inqaychus are concerned, however, repatriation is a moot issue.

19. Alfred Gell used the term "distributed personhood" to describe how the apparently living quality of art objects derives from being "enmeshed in a texture of social relationships" (1998: 17). I provide a longer discussion of distributed personhood in Allen 2015.

20. Repatriation, already the subject of an extensive literature, entails ethical, political and practical issues that go beyond the scope of this paper. See Bray's edited volume (2014) for a comprehensive overview. For a thoughtful and innovative exploration of a particular case see Ridington & Hastings, 1997.

To whom or to what would they be returned? And what, moreover, is the status of the inqaychus one increasingly finds for sale to tourists?

Arriaga correctly observed that it was the private familial character of inqaychus and the ceremonial surrounding them that put them beyond easy reach of the colonial inquisitors. Ironically, the same private character now contributes to the weakening of that ceremonial and perhaps eventually to its demise. It would be impossible (and pointless) to do a census of household inqaychus, but judging from what seems to be an increasing number being hawked to tourists in the streets of Cuzco, and the plethora of ancient and modern specimens for sale on the internet, many families are breaking the cycle of reciprocal appropriation and parting with the little stone animals. What is going on? If, as I have claimed, the relation with inqaychus is crucial to a family's economy and overall well-being – "a crucial node in a nexus of empowering relationships" – why are people giving them up for sale?

The answer obviously has to do with the deep and rapid transformations taking place in rural household economies and cultural orientations. Sonqueños, for example, no longer herd llamas and alpacas. This did not happen through a simple decline in interest, but as an unintended consequence of complex changes that took hold during the 1980s and '90s. I have written about these processes elsewhere (Allen, 2002: 203-247) but a very brief (and inevitably simplified) overview may help put the inqaychus' situation in perspective.

Many forces were in play during the 1980s and early '90s. After what was, for Sonqo, an optimistic period of new opportunities during the agrarian reform of the 1970s, Peru descended into political upheaval, violent conflict and economic collapse. The mid-1990s found Sonqueños demoralized and impoverished, with alcoholism on the rise. Some sought to change their lives through conversion to Pentecostal Protestantism, causing deep rifts in community cohesion. Conversion transforms (but does not entirely eliminate) the relationship with the earth, places and power objects, and partly explains the influx of inqaychus into the tourist markets. A more fundamental cause, however, was that traditionalists and Pentecostals had stopped herding camelids. This made their inqaychus both extraneous and problematic.

Sonqueños, for example, traditionally followed a system of sectorial fallowing; the territory was divided into seven roughly parallel sections and in any given year all households farmed in one of the sections. The other sections lay fallow, providing extensive common pastures for the herds of camelids and sheep. The next year the whole community moved on to the next section, and so-forth; they called this *muyuy*, "circulating around". Around 1980 various rural development projects promoted loans for commercial fertilizer and cash crops like barley. Finding that they could speed up their crop rotation, the more entrepreneurial households broke away from the communal rotation cycle.

Within a few years the system had ceased to function. With agricultural fields scattered through Sonqo's territory, it was harder to keep grazing animals from damaging the growing crops. Llamas in particular need large expanses of open pasture and raising them became increasingly problematic. Around the same time camelid herds were decimated by an invasion of parasitic liver flukes. Animal manure, moreover, was no longer considered essential to successful farming. In short, the systematic relationship between agricultural and pastoral economies was decisively broken. Family after family saw their last llamas or alpacas die, or they felt it necessary to sell or butcher them. "That old llama just liked to dance too much", said Luis sadly as he told me about slaughtering the last troublesome member of his herd.

What then does a household do with its llama and alpaca inqaychus? There is no point in tending and feeding them, yet letting them go hungry can have dire consequences. As Flores comments, abandoned inqaychus "have neither value nor ceremonial interest, but nevertheless are dangerous because they are 'starving'. It is best to keep one's distance from them" (Flores, 1977: 227). What better way to keep one's distance than to sell them to tourists who will take them far away?

Now starving little stones adorn mantelpieces and bookcases in many households throughout the "western" world (including mine, *see* Photos 1 a-c). Do they want to ease their hunger by devouring us from within? Perhaps. At the least they provide a fitting metaphor for a world characterized by extractive and lopsided relationships – relationships that may turn to "bite" us in the long run. Metaphor, too, is worth taking seriously.

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Stones Who Love Me: Dimensionality, Enclosure and Petrification in Andean Culture

In Quechua- and Aymara-speaking communities of the high Andes, certain small stone objects contain the well-being of their human owners. Described as "living ones" and "loving ones," they are thought to be gifts bestowed by powerful places that control the vitality and reproduction of herd animals. These objects originate in times of cosmic readjustment and transition. In these moments a fortunate individual may come across a beautiful animal that, when captured, shrinks until it becomes a tiny stone. This paper explores the animacy of these stones, emphasizing challenges to our established modes of thought, analysis and practice posed by the living quality – the personhood – of these "loving stones."

Key words: Andean culture, Quechua, Aymara, animism, ontology, talisman.

Des pierres qui m'aiment : dimensionnalité, imbrication et pétrification dans la culture andine

Dans les communautés quechuaphones et aymaraphones des hautes Andes, certains petits objets de pierre (inqaychu, illa) renferment le bien-être de leurs propriétaires humains. Désignés par les expressions : « ceux qui vivent » et « ceux qui aiment » ils sont considérés comme des dons accordés par des lieux puissants qui contrôlent la vitalité et la reproduction des animaux des troupeaux. Ces objets prennent leur naissance aux temps de réajustement et de transition cosmique. En ces moments, un individu chanceux qui rencontre un bel animal, s'il le capture, verra cet animal se rétrécir et devenir une petite pierre. Ce article explore le caractère animé de ces pierres, mettant l'accent sur le défi à nos modes usuels de pensée, d'analyse et de pratique que représente le caractère animé – le statut de personne – que l'on attribue à ces « pierres qui nous aiment ».

Mots-clés : culture andine, quechua, aymara, animisme, ontologie, talisman.

Piedras que me aman: dimensión, imbricación y petrificación en la cultura andina

En las comunidades de quechuahablantes y aymarahablantes de los Andes, algunos pequeños objetos de piedra (inqaychu, illa) poseen el bienestar de sus propietarios humanos. Designados por las expresiones "los que viven" y "los que aman", se consideran dones otorgados por los lugares potentes que controlan la vitalidad y la reproducción de los animales de las tropillas. Estos objetos nacen en los tiempos de reajuste y transición cósmica. En estos momentos un individuo afortunado puede venir a través de un hermoso animal que, al ser capturado, se contrae hasta que se convierte en una piedra pequeña. Este artículo explora la animicidad de estas piedras, haciendo hincapié en los retos a nuestros modos establecidos de pensamiento, análisis y práctica planteada por la calidad de vida –estado de persona– de estos "piedras que me aman".

Palabras clave: cultura andina, quechua, aymara, animismo, ontología, talismán.